THE SCARBOROUGH POVERTY CONFERENCE REPORT

PREPARED BY:

THE SCARBOROUGH POVERTY CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE

APRIL, 1989

89-05667/

TO CONCERNED TENANTS, AGENCY PERSONNEL AND POLITICIANS

The Planning Committee of the Scarborough Poverty Conference, June 1988, feels that the conference was a success. This was confirmed by the evaluation sheets of those who attended.

The mandate that came back from the participants was that a second Scarborough Poverty Conference should be held. The planning committee will be contacting interested people to assist in organizing the Second Scarborough Poverty Conference.

Due to the tremendous input from agencies and tenants who attended the conference, extra time was needed in order to present the information we gathered in the best possible way. It was for these reasons that we apologize for the lateness of the report.

Thanks to the Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto Foundation for providing financial support to this project. This has allowed our work to begin.

Hope to see you again at the next Scarborough Poverty Conference.

The Scarborough Poverty Conference
Planning Committee
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THE SCARBOROUGH POVERTY CONFERENCE REPORT

June 9 and 10, 1988

CLIFFCREST COMMUNITY CENTRE

1 MCCOWAN ROAD

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INTRODUCTION:

The City of Scarborough, whose population is growing at a steady rate, pri es itself in being the city of the future. This prediction is based on an expanding solid middle class income base. There is a growing concern at the community level that this vision fails to recognize the steady increase of low income immigrant, refugee and sole support families settling in Scarborough, many of which end up in Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority (M.T.H.A.) projects.

In June, 1987, a group of concerned Scarborough M.T.H.A. residents and resource people came together to discuss the concerns and problems of the poor in Scarborough. Out of this evolved 'The Scarborough poverty con erence'.

The two day conference included seven workshops on Housing, Foodbanks, the Disabled, Education, Immigrant families, Health and the Impact on families, all of which were facilitated by M.T.H.A. residents. In addition to the workshops, planning committee members made opening presentations and a resident was the keynote speaker for the 180 people in attendance. Twenty-five per cent of those in attendance were staff members from Metro Toronto Housing Association and other agencies serving Scarborough.

During the conference on June 9 and 10, 1988, residents were provided with lunch and daycare. They were also reimbursed for the cost of T.T.C. transportation.

On the second day of the conference, representatives from the Social Assistance Review Committee, who were appointed to study the entire Welfare and

Family Benefits Assistance system, presented the progress of their report (see Appendix I).

Opportunity for Advancement brought the Poverty Game for agency representatives to play. During the game the participants experienced the frustration, bitterness and resentfulness felt by those who are trapped in the lowest income bracket (see Appendix II).

On the lighter side, the 'Scarborough Poverty Players' entertained the participants of the conference with skits and songs pertaining to poverty. This effort was an attempt to make service providers realize the demeaning manner in which they treat the people who come to them for help.

HOUSING

M.T.H.A. residents who attended the Housing workshop, described their lives as a living nightmare. They live a life of fear, hopelessness, powerlessness and little or no freedom.

One resident described the scene of the maintenance workers searching through the garbage for information. Another participant told the group of cockroaches crawling on her daughter's face. The property manager blamed her by accusing her of not being a good housekeeper. Many participants expressed outrage over the lack of working elevators.

The attitude of the Housing Project staff came under heavy criticism. Admittedly, there are some workers who are concerned about residents, but others are cold and uncaring. The notes that are sent to residents reflect this attitude. Residents are not allowed to have washers or dryers and are somehow blamed for the condition of the pipes in the building.

Mothers who want to make the best of their housing situation find it difficult to do so. The open drug trafficking, the violence and the crimes against children add to a non-supportive environment. The eviction notices stuck on the doors for everyone to see is very demeaning. For those who are working, the battle for fair rent is never-ending. The residents are made to feel that they are responsible for all the ills that befall them.

The workshop looked at three areas: STIGMA, ATTITUDE, and POLICY.

Stigma:

The discussion focussed on the residents' feelings of shame and unworthiness. The residents' said:

- They have no privacy in M.T.H.A. because their garbage is searched for income statements
- M.T.H.A. management forces the residents to be deceitful.
- Eviction notices are stuck on doors for everyone to see.
- Tenants are ashamed of where they live because of the bad image M.T.H.A. has acquired.
- The stigma towards M.T.H.A. residents is increased because of the public's attitude.

Recommendations:

1. M.T.H.A. must respect the rights of residents. Advance notice should be given when entering a resident's apartment.
2. The M.T.H.A. must send eviction notice by mail. Their forms should be simplified in order to make them clear and readable.

3. Any contractors hired by the M.T.H.A. must be required to respect the privacy of the tenants.

4. The public must be educated about public housing.

Attitude:

Residents felt that the treatment they receive from Property Management is demeaning and all residents are categorized with drunks, drug traffickers and not given/shown any respect.

- Residents are treated as "lazy bums."

- The management staff is often rude, abrupt and dictatorial.

- Community Relation Workers (C.R.W.) must have a lighter work load if they are to be efficient and effective.

- M.T.H.A. staff must spend time in the projects relating to the residents.

- Managers who have a history of treating residents poorly should not be transferred to a different project, but instead should be made responsible for their attitude.

Policy:

The participants discussed how policies are drafted in the absence of residents. The policies seem to work for management but not for residents.

- Waiting for a transfer is long and unnecessary. Residents are subtly blamed for the housing crisis.

- There are too many people for the few housing units.

- Rent is calculated from gross pay rather than net pay.

- Maintenance orders take a long time to complete.

- Policies pertaining to the mentally ill, battered women and teen parents are made in boardrooms with little input from residents.

- M.T.H.A. does more to perpetuate the Poverty Cycle than prevent.

- Residents are given very little opportunity to work in the M.T.H.A.

Recommendations:

1. Rent should be calculated from the net pay rather than the gross pay. Single working parents should be able to save money to get out of M.T.H.A.

projects. This should be seen as the first step towards independence but instead it is a trap.

2. The Ministry of Social Services and the Ministry of Housing (some parts) should have a co-ordinated body.

3. Support services must be present in all communities. They must work with the disabled and need families.

4. A 24 hour support service registry should be set up for mentally ill residents.

5. Community groups must be given the power to assist in times of crisis. Security guards who know very little about the family are given the right, but not those who are familiar with the residents.

6. M.T.H.A. must get rid of discriminatory policies, i.e., mother and daughter sharing the same room, a battered woman must show she is battered to be considered for housing.

7. Daycare centres must be located in all housing projects. This gives single mothers more options.

8. More housing must be built.

In conclusion, Housing is a right. Residents living in M.T.H.A. projects must feel that they are contributing to society. They must feel that they can raise their

children with pride. Their needs or their station in life must not be held against them. M.T.H.A. management and policy makers can do well to listen to the voices of its residents.

IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

Education:

In our workshop we discussed the problems immigrant families have with regards to education. They are as follows:

- The language barrier
- The lack of understanding
- Unfair policies, such as repeating grades; e.g. immigrant children being bumped down 1 or 2 grades
- Special education classes label the child as a slower learner
- The pressures on immigrant families because of miscommunication and misunderstanding, e.g. being shy and they are taught to respect and accept authority; by not speaking up they are labelled unintelligent.

Recommendations:

1. The Boards of Education should provide more information to the parents of immigrant children in appropriate languages.

2. There should be activities available to immigrant children in their own language after school.

Employment:

In addition to education, the participants also discussed problems concerning employment. They are as follows:

- Discrimination
- Low paying jobs
- Lack of recognition of immigrants as intelligent and skilled people.
- The lack of proper training for immigrants whose first language is neither French or English
- The lack of suitable daycare. Daycare is required for persons working shift work as well as those who work nine to five.

Recommendations:

1. There should be recognition of immigrant's education and experiences from their own country.

2. Immigrants should be given equal consideration for employment opportunities.

Housing:

The participants discussed many problems pertaining to housing. They are as follows:

- The lack of affordable housing
- Immigrants are required to be a resident of Ontario for one year before they are eligible for public housing
- The lack of ethno-specific/culturally sensitive workers within M.T.H.A. as role models
- The lack of communication, trust and understanding between tenants, Community Relations Workers and Community Guardians
- Authority is enforced too strongly on tenants
- Discrimination based on income

Recommendations:

1. There should be more affordable housing.

2. There should be more ethno specific/culturally sensitive workers in M.T.H.A. projects.

3. More sensitivity should be given to immigrant's need.

4. The Race Relations Department of M.T.H.A. should be accountable to the ethno-racial members of M.T.H.A. communities.

Mental Health:

The following problems were discussed during the workshop regarding mental health:

- The isolation due to different cultural barriers
- The lack of sensitivity concerning the immigrant's needs
- Isolation due to the lack of extended family
- Job training and English classes etc., are not available to immigrant sponsors by family members, thus causing the end result of stress and depression
- The language barrier

Recommendations:

1. More support groups should be available.
2. There should be door to door outreach.
3. Recognition and credit should be given to work and education experienced by an immigrant in their own country.

EDUCATION

In the Education Workshop at the Scarborough Poverty Conference, the participants discussed issues concerning their children's schooling. As parents, the participants realize what a precious gift their children are. The realization is the reason that they are not satisified with the present education system. The following are the topics discussed and the conclusion that the participants came to.

Streaming:

"Streaming begins on your child's first day of junior kindergarten, although parents do not see it. The teachers and school as a whole begin by noticing the student's place of residence and parent's marital status. Low income and single parent families with children are constantly targetted to become part of the "BASIC" level process because of their circumstances. The students are assessed by the school who assume that they will be under achievers and instantly begin to treat them as such. These students usually end up in the special education classes regardless of their ability. It is here the labelling begins".

"The next stage is grades 7 and 8, the last grades before entering high school. This is the final stage in which the student's previous school is reviewed. Teacher's opinions, psychologists reports and special education evaluations are done. A final assessment is carried out and the usual result is the student's placement into the "BASIC" level. Supposedly, the only level that the low income family children can handle. Many parents feel that their children should be given the opportunity to try the general level".

Placement streamline is broken down into three levels:

ADVANCED, GENERAL AND BASIC

"The advanced level gives the student the pick of schools, courses and careers.

The general level gives the student the opportunity of going up to the advanced level, staying at the general level or going down to the basic level.

The basic level gives the student basic math and English and is supposed to prepare them for a trade. This also is seen as a waiting place until sixteen years of age, when most decide to enter the workforce as an unskilled worker".

Recommendations:

1. Politicians should make figures pertaining to the number of children who come from low income housing available.

2. Any decisions must include the student, school and the parent.

3. Remove the stigma of a student's address by treating low income families and M.T.H.A. students the same as a private sector child.

Students and the Effect of the System:

"The effect of streaming is first felt when the student is forced to leave his home school and established friendships for special education at a new school. The student's homelife is affected by busy schedules and his new life away from his playmates".

"The student, feels embarrassed by these changes and this affects his self esteem. By the time these students reach grades 7 and 8, they have been made to feel incapable of higher achievement and therefore resign themselves to be beaten by the system".

"The students that are at the basic level seldom go to college or university due to streaming and/or their financial situation. Information about grants and bursaries to basic level students is inconsistent unless, in the eyes of the guidance counsellor, the student is exceptional".

Recommendations:

1. Stop creating class structures and class awareness in our children.

2. A homework hotline should be set up to help kids when they get stuck, e.g., "Latch key kids."

3. Student's achievements should be the only thing on file and not judgemental comments.

Parents and the System:

"When a low income parent registers a child in school they are being judged. Factors such as being single parent, income and address are already condemning the parent(s) and their children in the eyes of the system. Streaming is never mentioned, although the process has already begun. Families that live in M.T.H.A. projects are especially easy to trace through this process. If the parent is unable to help the child with homework due to their own work schedule, it is seen as a lack of concern and is noted as such. At the first sign of "potential learning problems" the caring parent is persuaded to think that school is the be all and end all of deciding what is best for the child".

"When the child does not respond to the recommended course, the parent is alerted that poor choices have been made by the "experts" and the battle begins. This is an upward battle because once the parent has placed the child in the care of the system the hold is almost always hard to break. Pleading by parents on the child's behalf usually falls upon deaf ears, resulting in anger, frustration and a feeling of beating your head against a brick wall".

Recommendations:

1. Revive the P.T.A. to the real world and vital association that they once were.

2. Trustees must be visible and accessible to parents.

3. Increase awareness for parents by sending home information regarding school programs.

4. Inform parents what the chain of responsibility is. For example, teacher—principal—superintendent—and trustee of the Board of Education.

5. Interpreters should be provided for immigrant parents to increase their awareness.

The Educator:

The perception by the teacher of the student is especially important to the student's well being during the formative years. The workshop participants felt that a good teacher could stimulate a student to learn at a faster rate than the tests might have projected.

"Teachers' comments on report cards and student files are crucial as they may advance or condemn the student's academic progress. Both parents and teachers react to what they read and opinions are formed accordingly. The teacher must have the ability and sensitivity to teach all the students in the class, not just the so called "bright ones". Although the teacher sets out the lesson and explains the subject matter, children of mixed academic abilities learn from one another".

"The principal of a school, it seems, has the job of selling the teachers to the parents and the school board. Although it is admirable that the principal will

defend the honour and ability of a teacher, this sometimes is harmful to the child's learning process".

"The principal is the liaison between the teacher and the parent and it is his/her duty to listen to the concerns of the parents. The principal should investigate these concerns impartially and ensure beneficial treatment of the student".

"After the principal and teacher have been addressed, we found the superintendent is the person who coordinates the efforts that are made by the school personnel. The trustee is at the top of the list of ways to protest decisions made at the school. Unfortunately, the parents are unaware of the role the trustee plays in their child's life".

Recommendations:

1. To allow more time for all students, classes should be reduced to 20 students per teacher at the most.

Funding:

"Workshop participants felt that certain schools received better equipment than others due to the area in which the school is located. All students should have every advantage".

"In addition it was also felt that more attention should be given to apprenticeship in the area of trades, as schools can only give a rough idea of the work involved and do not properly prepare students to meet the real workforce".

"Everything should be done "FOR KIDS SAKE" and their future should be as productive as possible".

Recommendations:

1. Each school should have the same learning aids available, e.g., computers, sports equipment, etc.

FOODBANKS

A Foodbank Workshop was included in the conference planning because it affected many of the people living in Metro Toronto Housing Authority projects. There was a great deal of anger between the workers of the foodbanks and the recipients.

The forum started with the facilitator asking the group, "Should we close the foodbanks?" Many people reacted bitterly to this suggestion because they depend on the free food in times of emergency. The group objected to the treatment they received by the people who give the food to them. According to the group, some foodbank workers were rude and uncaring. Other agencies treated them with disdain while others drilled them with unnecessary questions.

Mrs. J., a mother of two, told the audience how ashamed she felt whenever she went to the foodbank. She felt degraded because she was not brought up to beg for food but she couldn't see her children go hungry.

Recommendations:

1. The Ministry of Social Services should increase the basis allowance and the amount a recipient is allowed to earn while receiving Family Benefits.

2. The users of the foodbanks should be allowed to run the foodbanks.

3. Detailed and sensitive questions should not be asked by the provider of food. Another method should be in place to ensure that the system is not being abused.

4. The root cause of the emergence of foodbanks should be examined.

5. Community gardens, food co-ops and buying clubs are alternatives to foodbanks.

6. M.T.H.A. should assist residents with garden projects and space for meetings.

7. Let us all get involved and work together to rid the cause and the need for foodbanks.

8. The community must be involved at the policy making level.

DISABLED

Webster's Dictionary definition: Disable; to render unable; to deprive of competent strength or power, physical or mental; to injure so as to be no longer fit for duty or service; to deprive of adequate means, instruments, or resources; to impair; disability: the state or quality of being disabled or unable; weakness; incapacity; inability.

Chamber's Dictionary definition: Disable; to deprive of power, to cripple, to disqualify.

NO ONE ASKED TO BE DISABLED DID THEY?

Metro Toronto Housing Authority:

For the most part, the M.T.H.A. is unaware of the needs of the disabled. A disabled person is sometimes seen as a bit of a "cry baby" who causes more work for them. This lack of understanding on the part of the M.T.H.A. leads some to believe that the workers are hard hearted and uncaring.

Housing:

The Disabled seem to be placed helter skelter throughout high rise buildings without any consideration for their disability, such as the amputees, the blind, the deaf, and those with health problems that limit movement and could hinder evacuation in an emergency situation.

Consider this:

If a fire breaks out in a high rise building, "How does a person confined to a wheelchair escape if they are above the first floor?" Upon the arrival of the firemen, the fireman shut the power off to the elevators. In addition, during the rescue, does the fireman save the person as well as their chair? NO. Who replaces the destroyed wheelchair?

In addition:

When a person on canes or in a walker or in a wheelchair enters a building with spring loaded door closers, how do they deal with this obstacle? If the door closer is strong, the disabled person has to fight with the door or wait for an able person to assist them.

Disabled washrooms are usually converted washrooms that are still not adequate. The room is usually too small, the door closer is too stiff and the assist bars are usually poorly placed. These are all small problems that only a disabled person who constantly deals with them would be aware of.

One of the incidents that was conveyed to the group concerned disabled parking spots. When an application was put in to designate a parking spot at one of the projects, permission was given after discussion. However, the disabled applicant was required to acquire the signs, paint the lines and symbol for the spot. The applicant found this experience to be embarrassing because of his onlooking neighbours. The participants felt that the M.T.H.A. should have done this task.

Recommendations:

1. Disabled people should be located on the lower floors of high rise buildings in the event of an emergency.

2. Elevators should be equipped with buttons that are low enough for a person in a wheelchair to reach. In addition, the numbers on the buttons should be raised or in braille for the blind.

3. Scattered housing for the disabled is preferred over ghettoizing their housing.

4. Wheelchair ramps should be placed at the front of the building rather than at the back of the building near the loading docks. This should reflect the parking for the disabled.

5. Revolving doors and spring loaded doors present problems for the disabled. Buildings equipped with this kind of door should be re-equipped with an electric eye automatic door opener on one or more of its doors.

Parking:

Although there have been laws made and attempts to enforce those laws, we found that the disabled parking leaves alot to be desired. We heard complaints concerning parking availability, poorly lit areas, poor law enforcement, poor snow clearance, bad attitudes on the part of the police as well as the general public, and in some instances, non-existent parking for the disabled.

Did you know that disabled parking is sometimes placed at the rear of buildings near the garbage bins, loading docks or service entrances?

Are you aware (according to police) that a property manager or owner of private property of such places as M.T.H.A., malls, individual stores and hotels have to request that cars that are illegally parked in handicapped parking be ticketed or towed?

The law has fines for violators, but because it is private property they must have permission to enforce the law and do their duty. A property owner is required by law to make disabled spots available. But most do not want to call police in the case of a violation because in effect, they are chasing away their business. For this reason, property owners do no feel it is in their best interest to call the police.

A concern that was expressed by some of the participants was that the parking spots provided were not large enough to accommodate a lift device. The spots should be one and one half the size of a regular parking spot to allow for the use of a lift.

Another concern was the upkeep of these spots during the winter months. The disabled spots are not being cleared of snow and ice. It was pointed out that, although the spot was initially cleared, it should be maintained because of the difficulty in placing a wheelchair into a snow bank of into a pile of slush. This condition makes it difficult to push. This situation also presents problems for those who are on canes or walkers.

In the police department there is a problem of awareness because of the confusion concerning the enforcement of the law relating to disabled parking. In the beginning, there were disabled stickers issued, then there was the disabled license plates and finally the permit for the disabled parking. Everyone concerned is confused. Which is valid? Is it one of the above, all of the above or a combination of the three?

Question?

Should a person with a temporary disability be able to obtain a disabled license plate for his vehicle? Should this person be able to retain this plate when he or she is once again able bodied and thereby abusing the parking and the efforts that have been made by those who are in permanent need of this parking?

It was suggested that this type of abuse does exist. Steps should be taken to ensure that those concerned with the issuing of disabled license plates should be aware of this abuse and therefore stop this misuse.

Recommendations:

1. All disabled vehicles should be issued colour coded permits that would attach to the driver's sun visor for display when occupying a handicapped parking spot. This should be the only identification used for parking in designated spots.

2. Where there is a designated parking spot being abused, the police should have the authority to ticket or tow without the permission of the property owner.

The parking is provided by law and therefore the law should not need permission to be enforced.

3. The disabled parking spots should be one and one half the widths of a regular parking spot to allow for the use of lift devices.

4. Disabled parking must be kept clear during the winter months as well as the access to and from the spot.

5. The City of Scarborough should clear ramps for wheelchairs if the property owners fail to do so. The owners should be billed and fined for this service.

Workmen's Compensation Board:

The Workmen's Compensation Board (W.C.B.) was the subject of much discussion since a large section of the disabled resulted from an industrial injury or disease. Many participants expressed anger and frustration about their experiences with the W.C.B. and the indifferences projected to them by the board. Examples of the indifferences were mentioned. The amount of times the files are in different departments ("the bouncing file") and cannot be immediately accessed. The broken work of adjudicators and the attitude that they are in control, leave many to feel that if they opposed this they will be classed as uncooperative and cut off from the benefits.

This brought forth the suggestion that the workers at the board should be more humane in their approach with the injured worker. Some participants

indicated that the board inflicted undue stress onto the disabled by the insensitivity, the lack of communication between departments, the lengths some workers will go to to discredit the injured worker, the lack of rights for the injured and the freedom with which the Board seems to have to experiment with those who are injured. Also mentioned was the lack of information provided about programs that are available and aids such as living and clothing allowances. These programs are not explained because it is assumed that the knowledge is there.

Participants in the workshop expressed the frustration of their doctor/surgeon in dealing with the W.C.B. system in regards to the constant accountability of patients progress. When in fact they are being informed as often as necessary by the doctor/surgeon that they feel is important.

One of the problems the Board seems to ignore is the impact on a family when a member is permanently injured. The spouse of an injured worker is ignored unless the worker has died.

The participants felt that the Board is a cheap form of injury insurance for companies and therefore an ally who attempts to keep the payments made to an injured person as low as possible at any cost.

Many said they felt demeaned, demoralized and degraded by the workers they dealt with. They felt that they had to do battle with the Board for their rights regardless of the pain they were expected to know the full workings of the Board even if this was their first injury or dealing with the Board.

It was determined that the knowledge of the worker involved was at times greatly suspect because for the most part they could not provide the necessary answers needed to solve the problems faced by the disabled person. This was seen not only as a lack of knowledge, but of experience and training from their employer.

Recommendations:

1. W.C.B. workers should take awareness training programs instructed by a disabled person on how to deal humanely with the disabled.

2. The meat chart/rating schedule* that the board uses to determine the extent of disability and amount of payment be done away with. (see Appendix III)

3. When W.C.B. doctors experiment with their patients (injured workers) malpractice suits should be brought against them if the doctors cannot justify their actions or if they were guessing.

General Recommendations:

1. There should be more disabled people on Boards such as the W.C.B., the M.T.H.A., Civic Planning Boards, O.H.I.P., Family services, and all other boards that deal with planning for the public and/or the disabled.

2. Since some disabilities are not visible, there should be a better definition of disabled.

3. O.H.I.P. and W.C.B. should provide (pay for) mobile phones or F.M. radio units for disabled persons vehicles.

4. O.H.I.P. should pay for ambulances called by the bystanders who are trying to help. For example, to help an epileptic seizure victim, if the hospital determines it isn't necessary.

5. Some of the money collected from lotteries should be turned into assistance for the disabled.

6. In the case of a disabled person being alone, a telephone should not be considered a luxury but instead a necessary requirement and therefore should be paid for by the section of the government responsible to/for the Disabled.

7. Washrooms for the disabled should have to meet a certain criteria rather than just a sign posted on the door.

8. There should be more public awareness through the use of the media. The public could learn the needs and the difficulties of the deaf, blind and amputees through commercials, documentaries and specials.

HEALTH

The World Health Organization's definition of health is:

"A state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

This was the definition of health that the participants in the health workshop addressed at the Scarborough Poverty Conference.

The participants in the group discussed the factors that they felt contributed to optimal health care. The factors are as follows: Attitude, Nutritious food, Affordable Medication, Family, Friends, Love, Church, a Pollution Free Environment, Affordable Daycare, Money, Transportation, Communication, Clothes, Community Agencies and Sunshine.

The participants then discussed three specific issues relating to Health: Money, Transportation and the Accountability of the Bureaucratic System.

<u>Money:</u>

A recurring issue was the inequality towards women as the bread winner, which filters down to the children. The fact that women are not being paid the same as men for the same job would contribute to this filter effect. The group felt that all health care should be available to all people.

The working poor cannot afford drugs or dental care for their family because they are too costly and therefore go without so they can provide food and shelter instead.

The end result of this vicious circle is that people are unhealthy. The lack of nutritious food and proper dental care would mean fewer days worked which leads to unemployment. This unemployment will burden the already overburdened social system. Therefore, people under a certain income level should be subsidized for drugs and dental care.

Recommendations:

1. The government should subsidize more work places around employees health care needs.

2. It should be a requirement/credit in school for children to take budgetting and food management courses from grade 3 to 12.

3. Health care should be taught throughout the school system, e.g. parenting courses.

Transportation:

The Public Transportation System is not accessible to everyone, geographically or if you are disabled in some way. For example, if the doors on T.T.C. vehicles were wider, people with canes and walkers would be able to travel

by bus and in turn would not have to rely on Wheeltrans, thus making more money for the T.T.C. In addition, more buses need to be introduced into the bus routes.

The group participants found that the cost of ambulance transportation was astronomical and they felt that this should be included in the universal health care costs.

Recommendations:

1. Participants would like to see an agency of volunteers set up to help with emergencies. An example of an emergency would be a single mother having to take her child to the hospital during the night without having money for cab fare or anybody to look after the other children. A volunteer would drive the mother to and from the hospital while another volunteer would watch the other children.

2. An affordable metro pass for college and university students, including mature students.

The Accountability of the Bureaucratic System:

This was an interesting topic of discussion which proved to be enlightening for agency personnel as well as the working poor in the group. Recommendations mostly emerged from this discussion. They are as follows:

Recommendations:

1. The group felt that a way to lessen or stop generational use of Welfare/F.B.A. is to let other recipients talk to high school students about the reality of life on welfare. The recipients realize some of these students know what it is really like from their perspective but not from an adult point of view.

2. Social policy should reflect social change.

3. Enforce "Deadbeat Dad" laws.

4. "Deadbeat Dad" support payments should not be used as taxable income for fathers.

5. Support payments not paid should be recovered at tax time.

6. Family Benefit Assistance, Welfare and Workmen's Compensation Board payments are not adequate and should be made to be.

7. All drugs should be subsidized by the government.

8. There should be universal dental care.

9. There should be self-esteem workshops given in school as part of a child's education.

10. There should be more places open for teens to go with qualified teen workers.

THE IMPACT ON FAMILIES

The Impact On Families was to be an overall look at the impact that all the other workshop topics have on families. We didn't get a chance to cover the many problems that families face in their day to day existence, so instead we discussed some of the very high level problems. These problems included Daycare, "Latch Key Kids", Family Law, Life Insurance and how these problems cause stress and in some cases the division of the family. When we listened to each of our stories and our experiences, we realized that the impact was indeed great.

Life Insurance:

One of the most degrading problems was the lack of dignity in the burial of a child or a welfare recipient. Welfare will not assist in the cost of the plot. There is no marker for the grave, making it seem as though the welfare parent is not suffering the same pain the property owner is when a loved one has died. Markers are needed to find the grave in order to visit and remember loved ones.

"A Life Insurance policy is necessary to prevent this from happening. Unfortunately, if you did not already have a life insurance policy before going on welfare, they will not start one for you. It is not your fault that you cannot pay for a decent burial and it is for this reason that extra money should be allotted to every recipient of F.B.A., welfare or disability to pay for life insurance. There should be enough to give a child a decent burial and ease the grief and shame at the kind of burial they now receive".

The participants also felt that a trustee should be named when a life insurance policy is obtained, so that in case of death, the government cannot take the money. Not only is life insurance required for burial purposes, but it is the right of every child to receive an education. Many policies will cover this, especially if the child loses a parent while in school. There is security for the parent because they would know that their child's education will be taken care of.

Recommendations:

1. Welfare and F.B.A. and other agencies should be more sensitive to parents suffering a loss.

2. Assist in the cost of a plot by paying for life insurance as part of the benefits.

3. Assisting and financing life insurance policies for families that did not have a policy before becoming recipients.

Daycare:

"Daycare is a growing concern to all parents, especially those on F.B.A. and Welfare. The lack of daycare and subsidies discourages those who want to return to school. Single fathers talked about having to refuse skilled and high paying jobs because shift work and the lack of after hours daycare. Daycares close at a certain time and if you are late it can become quite expensive. In some daycares, it's one dollar for every minute after six p.m."

The lack of subsidy space makes it difficult to go to school or work. Many single parents can't make ends meet with their cheques after paying for bus fare and daycare. Daycare should be part of Co-op committees, as is maintenance and recreation. A number of hours per week could be donated by the mothers in the co-op. These mothers would be screened before being accepted as possible daycare help.

In the case of M.T.H.A. tenants, it was suggested that there be a "welcome wagon" to greet new tenants. This "wagon" would inform the tenants about the daycare and babysitting available. It was also suggested that the people who are providing the daycare be trained through courses given by the M.T.H.A., if it is the tenants who are responsible for the daycare. It was agreed that rooms should be allotted in the building for daycare facilities. When screening the applicants, seniors should not be overlooked, since grandparents make the best babysitters!

It is only natural that people would worry about with whom their children are being left. That is why training is necessary. Some people from different cultures have different beliefs and therefore, cross cultural training is needed to ensure that caregivers are providing appropriate care.

Another concern of the group's was the mother's mental state. At times parents under stress could lose control if they did not get away from their child for a small period of time each day. This reason is usually met with a negative attitude. The women are told it is their fault for being in this position and if they were more aware this would not be happening to them. There needs to be a change in attitude toward parenting and motherhood.

Earlier in this report there was a suggestion that daycare in housing projects become available with the help of M.T.H.A. There is a program in some projects called Home Day Care Providers. It is a licensed daycare within a tenant's home where the children go and the provider is checked upon at regular intervals. This is run by Metropolitan Community Services Department Children's Services Division. It is usually a sole support mother. The money she earns does not affect her rent and is added onto her monthly cheque. Again, this should be in every M.T.H.A. project.

"Latch Key Kids":

This is a nation wide problem that involves people such as police officers, family courts and the Children's Aid Societies. "Latch key kids" are children who do not qualify for daycare, but cannot be left alone, according to the law. These kids are between 10 and 12 years olds.

There aren't any after hours daycare available. This means that sometimes single parents have to accept shift work and leave their child alone. This is one of the reasons that a system should be set up in which different people take turns caring for these children, but at the same time not be burdened by doing it every day by having to keep late hours. If this system is met with resistance, then subsidy should be extended to children up to 12 years of age.

The biggest fear among those with "latch key kids" was that other parents would report them to the Children's Aid Society without realizing that there was nothing they could do. The daycare subsidy ran out because the child was too old

and there is no money for babysitters. If the mother stays home then there isn't any money to put food on the table and all attempts to better themselves and their children go down the drain.

Most kids over the age of 10 years feel that they are too old for sitters and so the child is left alone because there is no alternative. Some parents feel that a child is safer alone at home than with a sitter they are not sure of.

The concern is great enough that parents of "Latch Key Kids" should be encouraged to develop a program of their own on their project.

The sad fact is, "Latch Key Kids" are forgotten by our own system.

Recommendations:

1. Subsidies should be extended to children up the age of 12 years old.

2. There should be more space in M.T.H.A. buildings for daycare facilities.

3. There should be more recreation for children who want more than a sitter.

4. Saturday is also an important day for daycare needs.

5. Seniors should be trained to care for children before and after school.

6. Employers should provide more workplace daycare.

7. Ethno-racial groups should have access to daycare services that is appropriate to their communities in their projects.

8. The Providers program should be made aware to all living in M.T.H.A. projects.

9. There should be a "Latch Key Kids" hotline for assistance with homework.

10. There should be more supervised after school programs in youth centres and recreation rooms in projects for "Latch Key Kids."

CONCLUSION

Our goals for the future are:

1. To take this report to Scarborough Mayor Joyce Trimmer and her council members

2. Send or take it to Brian Mulroney, David Peterson, John Turner, Bob Rae and the Ministers responsible for the issues that we have discussed in this report.

3. To have another Scarborough Poverty Conference, only this time take what we have discussed one step further by coming up with strategies to implement our recommendations.

Thank-you to everyone who attended our conference and made it such a success. We will see you at our next Scarborough Poverty Conference.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Poverty Conference asked John Southern, a member of the Social Assistance Review Committee, to come and tell us about the work of S.A.R.C. Mr. Southern is a blind person who has been involved with disabled person's organizations such as B.O.O.S.T. (Blind Organization with Self-Help Tactics) and People United for Self-Help. The Ontario government appointed him, along with eleven other people, to study the entire welfare and Family Benefits system. This committee looked at what is wrong with the way poor people are treated and made recommendations about how to reform the laws and policies.

At the conference, Mr. Southern told us that the committee had received over 1500 written submissions and talked to many more people. Most people told them that welfare and Family Benefits rates were much too low. Many people also were upset at the way they were treated by social workers, and complained that the rules are so complicated that it is very hard to know what you are entitled to. Basically, all of the issues and problems raised at our own Poverty Conference were thoroughly discussed by the Social Assistance Review Committee.

On September 6, 1988, S.A.R.C. released their report, titled "Transitions". The report contains 274 recommendations for improvements, covering every issue related to welfare and Family Benefits, and to some extent, other areas such as housing. The Committee said that some changes should happen right away, such as immediate increase in welfare and Family Benefits cheques, and changing a lot of

rules to make them simpler and fairer. They stress that people must be given more incentives and support to become self-sufficient.

It is important that many people learn what the S.A.R.C report says, and put pressure on the government to act on the recommendations.

THE POVERTY GAME

A.1 In the morning, participants assumed the identities of isolated sole support mothers on welfare. Week by week, month by month, participants attempted to survive on the actual incomes, abide by the same decisions that welfare mothers in this province must. Life events such as rape, car break downs, whether to hand over the custody of a child, and unplanned pregnancies were also incorporated into the morning's events. After the morning session, some key words or phrases describing how participants felt as their identifies included:

- frustrated
- scared
- constantly had to make the right decision
- feel other people make all the right decisions
- others have control of my life
- angry at children
- inadequate as parents
- desperate
- lonely
- bored
- bitter
- life is a roller coaster
- frightened

- worthless
- strong emotional responses and panic at the end of the month
- resentful because I'm denying myself

A.2 Some of the double binds of being on social assistance were:

- want to work but can't earn enough...no daycare or other support
- doesn't pay to get off assistance
- feel as though everyone blames me
- lowered my values, cheated and lied to survive
- system allows you to gamble for gain but penalizes you for earning through work
- no motivation to work because extras are deducted
- sell your soul to get help
- no subsidy after child is 10 years old. Then can be charged by C.A.S. for leaving child alone

B.1 The afternoon session brought with it the possibility of mutual support and social action through the formation of low income support groups. They were used for making new friends, getting information and support, sharing and recognition of skills. In some cases, they provided energy and incentive to get a job. It would have been easier to join the groups if there had been more encouragement, information and examples of exactly what would happen. This would have alleviated nervousness and fear.

B.2 Some key words describing how participants felt included:

- o those who worked were exhausted, less time for children
- o group helped to break the tedium
- o bored; decisions are always the same
- o still felt inadequate as parents even though I could buy a few treats from part-time work
- o stopped thinking about the future, lived day to day
- o still bored but group helped
- o jobs were good for self-esteem
- o group helped me feel less alone
- o can't help children emotionally
- o still resentful and angry
- o fear of unknown - what will happen if I try to make changes?
- o circumstances control of life
- o resigned
- o taking more risks

B.3 When asked what they had learned as a result of the workshop, participants identified the following:

- o what I would do to survive
- o why women report on one another
- o learned the double binds involved
- o learned how one's self-esteem erodes

- easy to lose motivation
- why people lie and cheat to workers
- why the poor have the attitudes they do about the system, agencies and reports
- how difficult it is to get through the month
- why poor women get so angry with their children

B.4 Actions participants decided to take bases on their learning were:

- listen more carefully
- to be empathetic
- to be non-judgemental
- be more informed re: referrals
- check policies at my agency
- to follow through quickly
- become sensitive to double binds
- not to jump to conclusions
- try to extend office hours - be more available to clients

POVERTY GAME EVALUATION

1. Twenty-four participants completed the evaluation. They expected to learn:

   - a better understanding of the experience of being poor
   - more insight into the plight of single moms on assistance
   - how it feels to be a welfare recipient
   - how to manipulate funds allocated to me from the government
   - to understand systematic problems perpetuating poverty cycle

2. All participants had their expectations met. In addition, they commented:

   - I understand now why it is so hard to provide a better future
   - I felt the frustration, anxiety and tedium
   - this is a very poignant way of showing what it is like to be poor
   - the workshop enhanced my understanding
   - I understand people's view of agencies and workers better now

3. All participants felt <u>some</u> (10) or <u>a great deal</u> (14) of involvement in the game.

4. Nineteen participants felt participation in the workshop increased their understanding of issues relating to their jobs. They explained that:

   - I am more aware of issues and motivation
   - Clients have short term plan/vision by necessity

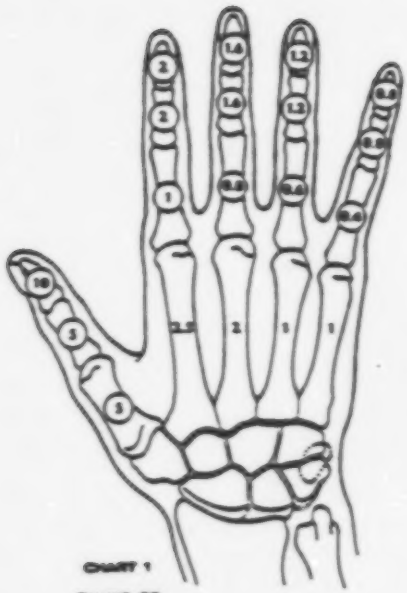

CHART 1

THUMB OR SINGLE FINGER

AWARD HALF VALUE SHOWN IF DISABILITY ONLY INVOLVES A SINGLE PHALANX.

CHART 2 - 2 FINGERS

1½ Times The Sum Of The Single Values

Index & Middle at distal	5.4
Index & Ring at distal	4.8
Index & Little at distal	4.2
Middle & Ring at distal	4.2
Middle & Little at distal	3.6
Ring & Little at distal	3.
Index & Middle at P.I.P.	10.8
Index & Ring at P.I.P.	9.6
Index & Little at P.I.P.	8.4
Middle & Ring at P.I.P.	8.4
Middle & Little at P.I.P.	7.2
Ring & Little at P.I.P.	6
Index & Middle at Metacarpal	13.5
Index & Ring at Metacarpal	12.
Index & Little at Metacarpal	10.5
Middle & Ring at Metacarpal	10.5
Middle & Little at Metacarpal	9.
Ring & Little at Metacarpal	7.5

Appendix III "The Meat Chart"

Appendix IV

WORKSHOP FACILITATORS/PLANNING COMMITTEE

Frank Smith	Valia Rd	Disabed Workshop
Anne Smith	Valia Rd.	Impact on Families Workshop
Heather Pringle	Valia Rd.	Education Workshop
Joyce Watt	Danzig St.	Health Workshop
Prema Nair	Lawrence/Suan	Immigrant Family
Carol Cayenne	Warden Woods	Housing/Foodbanks Workshop

Appendix V

The planning committee would also like to thank the following resource people for their services:

Helen Whalen	Metro Community Services
Gord Bricker	M.T.H.A. Community Relations Worker
Terry Skelten	M.T.H.A. Race Relations
Nancy Vanderplatt	Scarborough Legal Services
Ed Hogg	Resource for the Disabled
Terry Menagh	M.T.H.A. Community Relations Worker
Kenn Richard	Metro Community Services
Barry Thomas	Tropicana Community Services
Marcia Christian	M.T.H.A.
Cynthia Tryton	Gordonridge
Luna Ramkhalawansigh	Metropolitan Community Development Officer

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